

Story 1797 (1991 Tape 5)

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Özcan, 26

Location: Arhavi, kaza town
of Artvin Province

Date: June 14, 1991

The Mystery of Torpedo Firing Explained by Laz¹

A young Laz from this area was called up to fulfill his required military duty.² When he reported for duty, he was assigned to the Turkish navy,³ and shortly after that he was stationed aboard a submarine.

When this young Laz had finished his military service two years later, he returned to his village, which

¹The word Laz now refers to any Turkish resident of the Black Sea coast. Originally it referred to a smaller ethnic minority, the Lazi, living primarily in Trabzon, Rize and Artvin provinces in extreme northeastern Turkey. Lazes are stereotyped as being stupid or inept, but (as with many stereotypes) there is no evidence to support such a put-down. In fact, this very tale indicates how clever the Laz people can be.

²In Turkey all able-bodied males between 18 and 40 are required to complete at least a brief period of military service. The length of time varies with the country's military or suspected military needs and with the education of the individual draftee.

³Maritime pursuits account for an appreciable proportion of Laz employment. Laz boys spend much of their time in boats, small or large, on the Black Sea. Supposedly they make better sailors than most other Turks, and supposedly military authorities assign them, whenever possible, to the Turkish navy. This would be very reasonable, and we have no grounds to question its accuracy, but, on the other hand, we have never seen official statistics verifying this.

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was part of this kaza. When he went to the village coffeehouse, several of his friends gathered around him and asked him many questions about the operation of a submarine. Some of their questions he answered quite easily, but others he had difficulty answering. The question that gave him the greatest difficulty concerned firing of torpedoes while a submarine was submerged. "When a torpedo is fired, why doesn't water rush in the hole through which the torpedo is leaving? Couldn't that water sink the submarine?"

no," said the Laz sailor. "No water comes in. not?" they asked.

The Laz did not actually know the scientific answer to this question. He remained silent for a moment. Then he asked the group, "You have all been swimming--haven't you?"

"Yes, of course," they all answered.

you ever fart while you were in the water?"

"Yes," several said.

"Well, when you did that, did you fill up with water and sink?"